BUSINESS FINDS PROFITABLE USE FOR BOOKS

The Clerk and the Customer

THE HUMAN SIDE OF RETAIL SELLING. By Ruth Leigh. D. Appleton & Co

Reviewed by GEORGE KENT.

The "Human Side of Retail Selling" is only a textbook, but the success of the trade which it teaches is rooted in the shifting sands of human nature, which is fundamentally artistic.

High prices are paid for seats at performances far inferior in their power of human appeal to those which are frequently enacted in department stores. A certain art critic takes great pleasure in buying a tie. When he enters the haberdasher's he departs from his corporeal self and becomes a spectator, watching with intense glee the tug of war between the unconcerned intellectual and the alert, smooth tongued persuader. The result—the necktie—is an incidental.

The author relates an anecdote of a sixteen-year-old girl "between little girlhood and womanhood—hard to fit hard to suit, hard to handle"—the sweet and bitter age. In company with her mother she has come to the store to buy a suit. She has just tried on one of her mother's suggestion and thrown it away.

"I won't wear it," she stamps. "I won't! Makes me look like a little girl."

"Well, then, you won't get any suit," her mother says with quiet finality. "I know what is suitable for a girl your age to wear and you're too young to wear any other style."

"Then I don't want anything." The daughter sinks into her chair and tears follow.

Only a fragment, but intense and provocative, and obviously clipped from the page of experience.

In the background hovers the suave female Chesterfield baiting her words for our frailties. She is the saleswoman, who will doubtless dry the eyes of the little girl and skilfully work the mother out of her conservatism, and by reconciling them make two satisfied persons and two customers for her employers. She will find out your vanity and be playing upon it before you have been beside her counter for five minutes. She will impress you as a delightful companion, no matter what your disposition. You will go away with a contented giggle in your throat, patting your purchase with a feeling of pleasure.

The much bewept department store slavey of the fictionists seems to be rapidly disappearing. The tear stained pages of O. Henry, Fanny Hurst and other romantic sympathizers will soon be as out of date economically as Dickens.

Universities have acknowledged her importance by establishing schools for instruction in the "art of retail selling." Manufacturers have come to realize that the salesgirl is the test link in the entire chain of production and distribution. The column of text books concerned with the problems of the girl behind the counter is mounting daily skyward. No higher tribute can be paid to the importance and difficulty of a profession than the multiplication of explanatory volumes. Retail selling has arrived, in a manner of speaking.

In Miss Leigh's volume, an exceedingly readable and valuable addition to the literature of the subject, the preface sums up the advance of the saleswoman as follows:

"The retail salesperson has developed from the old time humorous 'girl behind the counter' character into a trained, intelligent business person upon whom the success of modern merchandising depends.

"The retail merchant of to-day admits frankly that his store's reputation lies in the hands of his sales people. His stock must be properly sold and customers courteously served. Only capable sales people can be entrusted with these vital duties, for their efforts can make or break the store's reputation.

"Then, too, manufacturers are realizing that intensive distribution and million dollar advertising campaigns are wasted unless retail sales people make good when they sell. It is this retail sales force, not advertising, that must *finally persuade the ultimate consumer to buy goods.*

"Consequently, schools, high schools and colleges have recognized retail salesmanship as a profitable vocation in which men and women should receive organized training. Those within the modern department store itself have also glimpsed broad opportunities in merchandising, buying, selling, advertising, financing, art display, personnel management, all based on the vocation and training of retail salesmanship."

The structure of industry rests to a large extent on the sales people. "Without customers the most efficiently managed store in the world would fail to make any profit on the most carefully selected merchandise." If no goods were sold the millions which crowd the cities would have no work; there would be no reason for farmers producing a surplus . . . in short, considerable responsibility rests upon the shoulders of the retail salesperson.

The art of selling is really the art of pleasing and like the art of being a perfect hostess, a difficult one to acquire. Schools attached to universities, department store schools and other institutions are, however, working to that end, the end of teaching girls how to meet people, how to please them personally and how to please them permanently by satisfying their desires. It is an art which demands infinite patience—the patience of a teacher or the mother of small children; the self-control of a Hindu fakir, and the understanding of human nature, its strength and its frailty, which Chesterfield betrayed in his letters to his son.

There is already noticeable considerable improvement in the quality of saleswomen, and in the future, if text book and class room ideals are in any manner adhered to, saleswomen will be—almost all of them—perfect hostesses and charming women. They will have mastered the art of pleasing. More than that, they will have acquired the knowledge and cultivated the imagination necessary to understand and clarify the customer's desire to such an extent as to be able to give intelligent advice and effect sales which give pleasure all around. All of this will have a far reaching effect on the nation's womanhood because statistics show that no small percentage of young women choose sales work as a profession.

Rendering of satisfaction to their customers will require in the saleswomen an understanding of materials and a knowledge of the genuine value of every article sold across their counters. This fact must have the effect of improving the standard and quality of manufactures. The desire of the ideal saleswoman will always be to render lasting satisfaction.

With great clearness Miss Leigh sets forth her subject. She has divided her subject into five parts, dealing with the "salesperson, the merchandise, the customer, the sale, and, finally, the sales routine." The young woman is urged to bear in mind that she is part of an organization, and that it therefore behooves her to cooperate with her fellow workers and other departments as much as possible.

She is also exhorted to improve herself, to study and to read. She is to interest herself in physical culture, which will teach her to stand up under a strain and to subject herself to discipline which will provide her with the preliminary equipment. Concerning her merchandise, she is advised to read trades papers, advertisements and manufacturers' leaflets. She is to make herself thoroughly conversant with all details of her stock and learn to arrange it attractively.

Most interesting, yet coldest, of chapters are those which deal with the customer. The highty-tighty ladies who fix the saleswoman with their lorgnettes, and the homey tattletale, find themselves labelled and stuck up for inspection like strange bugs.

The varied instincts which dominate them are herein enumerated with exactness. Even the schedule of mental activity by hours is set down so that the saleswoman will be able to gauge the keenness of her opponent across the counter. The tactful demeanor and the insincere caress are included in the Machiavellian catalogue. "A sure method of winning a mother's good will is to pay admiring attention to her child." That feels like cold iron.

"Soothe the tired customer," counsels the author. "Agree with her; serve her quickly and quietly, and when she indicates the slightest dislike to any article remove it from her vision.

"'Ugh! don't show me cerise; I loathe that color,' the nervous customer exclaims with a shudder, as a saleswoman brings out a cerise hat. Without a word it is set down on a nearby table. During intervals of trying on different hats the customer keeps glancing nervously at the hat. Presently she turns to the saleswoman and exclaims shrilly:

"'My dear, if you don't take away that cerise hat I'll have to go out. I just detest that color; it makes me nervous.'

"So the saleswoman quietly removes it from her gaze."

The author goes on enumerating the different types, appending to each advice as to the handling. Types mentioned include the irritable customer, the deliberate customer, the snobbish customer, the suspicious customer, the decisive customer, the absent minded customer, the customer "just looking around," the customer shopping with a friend, the "nosey" customer, the uncertain customer, the "hard to please" customer, the aloof customer, the woman shopping with child, mother and daughter customers, the stingy customer, the frightened and timid customer, the child customer and the man shopping in the woman's department.

To mitigate somewhat the frigid effect of pigeonholing human beings in this manner, Miss Leigh concludes the chapter with this remark:

"Remember this: Every patron you serve is an individual problem. In dealing with her your first object is to discover as accurately as you can what she thinks and feels. After that you must adjust *your* attitude to hers; you must win her good will. When the sale is completed you have worked out a difficult, complicated human problem."

Schools for the teaching of this trade have the advantage of possessing the opportunity to put to practical trial all the instruction of the class room. New York University, which maintains such a school, devotes the mornings to theoretical work and in the afternoons packs the students off to the different department stores where by actually waiting on counter the thin "inhuman theories" are put to the test. Wherefore, even the inhuman side of selling is eliminated.

It is interesting to note in conclusion that the traits of the good salesman are in almost every case the traits of the successful person, no matter what the profession. Men of small calibre frequently rise to great heights because they possess the knack of selling themselves to their employers and the men they meet in business, while men of greater ability will struggle along in semi-poverty because they lack this quality.

Every book on salesmanship contains a number of widely applicable truths, for success in its ordinary connotation—in reality an arbitrary symbol of victory over life—is based entirely upon the art of salesmanship. The pathetic side—the really human side—of selling is the undeserved indigence and suffering of those who have ability but do not know and cannot learn the art, "those who stand and wait."

Prosperity Ran Through Pipes

THE EVOLUTION OF THE OIL INDUSTRY. By Victor Ross. Doubleday, Page & Co.

It is well-nigh impossible to estimate the benefits that have accrued to the world at large during the past half century through the development of organized industry, with all that it has meant in the way of maximum standardized production and minimum waste. And in view of the fact that practically every industry has been revolutionized by the use of petroleum or one of its biproducts, the importance of oil and its development as a factor in world economics can be readily appreciated.

Although most industries have a romance of their own, there is perhaps none in which it has been so paramount as in "The Evolution of the Oil Industry." Necessity may be the mother of invention, but this does not gainsay the fact that many great initial discoveries have been accidental or incidental. Petroleum was both. For it was the growing American population of sixty years ago that necessitated the establishment of brine wells to secure adequate quantities of salt, and the Pennsylvania oil discoveries can be directly traced to this boring for salt. Of course there must always be a pioneer, a leader with vision and sufficient determination to blaze the trail. The name of Edwin Laurencine Drake, and the significant part he played in the founding of the oil industry, should be known to every one familiar with the word petroleum. His efforts, and the work of those master minds that followed in his wake and accomplished the herculean task of "girdling the United States with a system of oil pipe lines that has no parallel anywhere," must stand as a monument for all time to American fortitude and enterprise.

The author of this little book is to be greatly commended. For, in spite of the vastness of the subject, Mr. Ross has managed to give an exceedingly succinct survey, which is none the less comprehensive. We are told many things about the history of petroleum apart from its development, how the industry has affected maritime commerce the world over, how "the Allies floated to victory on a sea of oil," and what America must do if our oil resources are to be safeguarded in industrial international affairs—all this, and more.

Picking Men by Psychology

TRADE TESTS. By J. Crosby Chapman. Henry Holt & Co.

"Trade Tests" is the first comprehensive treatise on what the Government accomplished during the war in the field of vocational guidance. The author is J. Crosby Chapman, the psychologist and personnel expert, who during the war served in the tests and standards section of the War Department as consulting expert. Except for a special article or two and War Department pamphlets nothing has been written on this subject before.

The United States during the war was confronted by the problem of supplying the army with thousands of skilled workmen, expert in their different trades. How to select these from the vast number of recruits, select them quickly and in a manner that would assure the commander of their regiments of their fitness and reliability was the problem of the War Department.

The army problem differed from the problem of large manufacturers, because in the army there could be no trial week to serve as a test, and, furthermore, there could not be spared men trained in the different trades to do the examining. The examining had to be done by persons ignorant of the trades in which they were conducting examinations.

The objects of the committee on classification of personnel, which was set the task of evolving a system of examination, were the following: "(1) The methods must be applicable to all trades; (2) the methods must be such that they can be employed by an intelligent examiner who has no personal knowledge of the trade; (3) the methods must yield a rating of a man which is independent of the examiner's individual judgment; in other words, the test must be objective and not subjective; (4) the methods must be rapid and in most cases must not require the use of tools or apparatus.

All these objects were accomplished by a corps of experts, among whom the author selects for special mention such men as Dr. E. L. Thorndike, Col. Walter Dill Scott and Dr. W. V. Bingham, all of whom are eminent in the domain of psychology.

"Essentially, the trade test is a measuring rod which can be used without trade knowledge on the part of the examiner for rating in objective quantitative terms the degree of trade ability possessed by the person under examination," declares the author.

"The idea of measuring such a human trait as trade ability by an objective scale is of such recent date that it calls for some discussion. . . . The distinction between the subjective scale which expresses ability in terms of 'excellent, good, poor, bad,' and the objective scale which expresses ability in terms that are constant in value and universally understood cannot be too clearly made. In the cast of a perfectly objective scale all competent persons agree, while in the case of a perfectly subjective scale, all competent persons disagree, save by chance."

In order to obtain such a test examiners in vocational schools and large employers of skilled labor were consulted, from both of which classes valuable ideas were taken. As a matter of fact, a considerable body of manufacturers cooperated with the War Department in the making of the tests.

Standards of perfection in the different trades were established after much thought and study. These standards or "measuring rods" were marked off into lengths corresponding to the degree of perfection necessary in the making of apprentice, journeyman, expert, &c. Questions were evolved, each of which had a definite numerical value. The examiners were provided with both questions and answers and were able in this way to rate the examinee and accurately pigeonhole according to his trade ability. The tests were oral and written. There were also picture tests and performance tests.

"The use of methods of job analysis and the application of trade tests," says the author, "are not theoretical ideas which will have to fight for a hearing. The situation in almost all large industries is crying out for some device which will meet the present difficulties of operation. Every large employment office, either through its follow up work, when using methods of general interview, or else through its expensive office pay roll, when the examinations are conducted by experts, knows how necessary is some radical change in the mechanism of placement. Just as in the army the occupational specifications and trade tests came into existence to meet urgent demands of the personnel officers, who saw their own methods were completely breaking down, so also in industry job analysis and trade tests will enter to fill a want, the magnitude of which is best known to the employment office itself."

Dr. Chapman admits that the methods evolved by the army are not suited in their present form to civilian industry, but he believes with some modification the discoveries of the War Department are practical, and, with here and there a modification, can be applied to all modern industry.

Discussing job analysis the author believes that the further splitting up of trades is inevitable. He asserts that men ought not to be hired on the basis of general fitness but on the basis of their fitness for a particular job. Under this arrangement such a classification as machinists will disappear, and in its place will appear such as job 26, job 43, &c. These new classifications will be obtained by analyzing every job on the basis of its physical, mental, economic and human characteristics. Applicants will be tested, and if their ratings are those of the vacancies they will be hired.

"When the scale of production which the necessities of the world make imperative is begun," asserts Dr. Chapman, "industry will be in desperate need of more and particularly skilled men. Without the strictest economy in the use of human resources the process of adjustment may be indefinitely prolonged. The decline in the quantity of labor available must eventually mean the introduction of a more effective method of using the knowledge and skill of each man employed.

"Increased personnel, however expensive the procedure, is the only possible solution unless industry is willing to make radical alterations in the methods of hiring, assigning, transferring and training men. To effect these alterations the most careful attention will have to be given to the related problem of training the employee and measuring objectively the degree of his proficiency. Maximum production goes hand in hand with correct placement."

Sketching the Moon-Calf's Driver

By STUART DAVIS.

I FOUND Floyd Dell working on his next novel in a little apartment down on Macdougal street. "I hope I didn't interrupt you," I said, knowing how angry authors usually get at being disturbed in the middle of a chapter. "But," I added, "you've been psycho-analyzed, I understand, so you wouldn't mind a little thing like that, anyway. Is it really true about psycho-analysis making a writer's work easier?"

"You're the eighth person this week who has asked me that question," he said. "And look at this." He pointed to a pile of letters. "All from writers who want to know about psycho-analysis. Yes, it's true that psycho-analysis helps a writer. To begin with, as any writer's wife can tell you, a writer is likely to be a rather neurotic person—easily upset about everything. He can't stand it to have children around the house, or he can't bear to be called to his meals, or he gets into difficulties with his writing and is impossible to live with. He needs to get his psychic tangles straightened out, so that he can go at his work as calmly and methodically as a bricklayer."

"How does psycho-analysis do all that?" I asked.

"That's a long story," he answered. "I refer you to the words of Freud, Ferenczi, Pfister, Frink, and so forth. Besides, you wouldn't believe me if I told you. The proof of psycho-analysis is in being psycho-analyzed."

"Are there any drawbacks?" I asked.

"Yes—it takes a good deal of time and money—both of which a writer is likely to be short of."

"Speaking of money," I said, "what are you going to do with your royalties from 'Moon-Calf'?"

"Live in the country and watch the strawberries grow," he said. "My wife and I have three-quarters of an acre up at Croton-on-Hudson, and I can't imagine anything more delightful than living there all the year around."

"How about the Bolshevik revolution? Aren't you afraid you'll be expropriated?"

"Not this year—and after that I wouldn't mind, just so I got all the strawberries I wanted to eat for once in my life, first."

Floyd Dell.

It is not surprising to learn that Clarice E. Richards's book, "A Tenderfoot Bride" (Revell), proved the best selling book in the city of Denver during the late holiday season, for did not Mrs. Richards know her subject?

Marketing---a Field Overlooked

MARKETING AND ITS PROBLEMS. By C. S. Duncan. D. Appleton & Co.

Reviewed by DUDLEY A. SIDDALL.

It isn't unusual to hear young men bemoan the fact that they weren't born a hundred years ago. Only yesterday the Office Boy was saying:

"Gee, a kid nowadays ain't got a chanst. All the railroads is built, all the coal and copper and gold is discovered, all the engines and motors is invented. There ain't nothing a feller can do no more exceptin' just *work.*"

Edison, Rockefeller, Ford and the rest of them have hardly scratched the surface of a big field for invention and discovery. That field is marketing. It actually costs more to sell a great many articles than it does to make them in these days of automatic machinery and progressive assembly. The men and women of the future who can cut selling costs will do as much for the progress of the human race as the men and women who in the past have cut manufacturing costs, and incidentally they will win big rewards for doing it.

Marketing—or distribution—has always been one of the human being's most formidable problems—even since before the time of the ancient famines in Egypt, which Joseph ended by installing the predecessor of the modern jobber's warehouse. Yet marketing, as a study, is so new that D. Appleton & Co. are well within the bounds of truth when they assert that "Marketing, Its Problems and Methods" is the first book to cover thoroughly the marketing of manufactured goods, as well as of raw materials and farm products.

There isn't in the whole field of marketing such a thing as an "expert." The men who have achieved the greatest successes will freely admit that they are only beginners. So long as trainloads of wheat going east pass trainloads of wheat going west, so long as there's a grocery store to every fifty families in many and many a town, so long as it costs numerous types of stores 30 per cent. to "do business"—just so long will there be big opportunities for invention and discovery in marketing.

Mr. Duncan has crammed the 500 pages of his book with facts and principles. He has isolated causes and sought out influences. Fortunately he has adopted an easily understood style in presenting his subject, for the book covers a field that should be studied by shipping clerks and truck drivers as well as by presidents and general managers.

The empty theories and mere phrases that are sheer deadload in many a so-called "business book" are missing in Mr. Duncan's volume. His aim has been to present a broad survey of marketing; a foundation on which his readers can build their specialized studies in various lines of selling and distributing.

Reaching a Man's Reason and Will

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSUASION. By William MacPherson. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Unlike most people who present a thesis Mr. MacPherson does not overestimate its value. He realizes that there are limits to the powers of persuasion with which he deals. He believes in the old saying:

> A man convinced against his will
> Is of the same opinion still.

On this point he says: "Every point or wish with which our persuasions concern themselves generates a series of images appropriate to it. John Jones, who believes in prohibition, may enliven and add force to his belief by imagining in detail the environment around which the drink traffic flourishes and works most harm—the drunkard's home, its poverty and squalid surroundings, the suffering and misery caused to women and children by excessive drinking. The picture of a group of workingmen enjoying a glass of beer and with their wives and children finding rational relaxation amid pleasant surroundings, if it occurred at all to John Jones, would be at once rejected; it would not harmonize with his particular belief or wish."

Throughout this book Mr. MacPherson shows this same power of analysis. He speaks of the types of appeal which may be made—the intellectual, the imaginative and the emotional. He deals with the suggestibility of the mob. He is not only versed in the technique of modern psychology, he knows how to apply it.

Mr. MacPherson realizes that persuasion is a big subject. It is more than the spoken word. Tyrtæus and Orpheus could give us moderns a tip as to the power of music to soothe the savage breast. Mr. MacPherson discourses upon the posters which urged the young man to enlist, although he is silent on those campaign flamers which said, "He kept us out of war." He sees a future for the movies in the art of persuasion. The screen is already being used by exporters in all parts of the earth. It is legitimate to harness this force to spread propaganda, but it seems as if Mr. MacPherson were riding his hobby a bit too far when he discourses upon persuasion in art.

An important work, entitled "The Case of Corea," is shortly to be issued by the Revell Company. It is written by Henry Chung, member of the Corean Commission to America and Europe. Mr. Chung writes as a Corean patriot, declaring that Corea has entered the lists for complete independence, and that no concessions granted by her present ruler, Japan, will be accepted as a substitute for national freedom.